

EDITORIALS

Tale of Two Confirmations

The contrast in the ways that the Senate has treated the confirmation of Admiral Stansfield Turner as the nation's chief of intelligence and Paul Warnke as its negotiator for arms control tells a great deal—much of it troubling, if not actually alarming—about the problems President Carter will have in scrapping old orthodoxies and finding support for new doctrines of foreign policy. The hearings, taken together, give a bleak picture of the flexibility Congress will grant to the new President as he tries to break out of the worn molds of the cold war.

The Admiral sailed through his oral exam with not so much as a barnacle of criticism sticking to him. A few of the Senators, those who had learned painful and even humiliating lessons from the exposures of their careless ignorance of past outrages by the CIA, tried to find a scruple under the skin of this suave sailor. Senator Mathias (R., Md.) asked him if he would inform the theoretically responsible "oversight" committee about covert operations before they happened.

The Admiral's answer was revealing in the wrong note it struck. He said he might eliminate from any such advance notice elements the committee would "not want to hear." This phrase recalled to Mathias some of the worst days of "patriotic" blindness in Congress. "That's a sore phrase around here," said the Maryland Senator. He was thinking of "a senior Senator [Stennis, D., Miss.] who said, 'I don't want to hear it' about some of the CIA's dirty tricks in the not distant past.

"There are a lot of things in life we don't want to hear or know about," Mathias continued, adding, "I don't think that should be a criterion for withholding information." The signs that Turner will be frank with the responsible committees of Congress about future CIA huggermugger were faint, if they appeared at all; he merely promised to "study" the matter of protecting the civil liberties of American citizens as the CIA goes about its normal business of spying. And the committee left the impression that it was still guided by the secondary meaning of "oversight," which is, of course, to overlook.

Paul Warnke, on the other hand, was treated by one of the two committees he has had to appease as if he were a bomb-throwing radical eager to turn the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency into an arm of the Soviet Politburo. The grilling by the Committee on Foreign Relations was comparatively civil, but when the armed services warriors (who have no technical jurisdiction over the confirmation) had their turn, the questioning turned rough.

Warnke told this *macho* group that "rough equivalence [in arms] would have to do," and he noted that the phrase was popular with those notorious weaklings, the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He made a number of sensible observations, including one that any arms control agreement "would have to be fair to both sides" if it was to endure.

This common sense statement sailed over the heads of some of the fierce defenders of the flag. They punished him with barely concealed sarcasm for having harbored

the notion that some of the weapons systems dear to the military's heart, and just as fondly regarded by the barons of the Congressional defense realm, were wasteful and even dangerous—because they led to reciprocal and perhaps even greater escalation by the Russians.

"I think we have created a monster," said that amazing reactionary Sen. Jake Garn (R., Utah), referring to the Soviet armed strength as if it were a creation of pusillanimous American leaders. He looked back with offended nostalgia to that brief period after World War II when the United States, he said, had "the possibility or potential . . . of ruling the world."

To this imperial dream Warnke had the only sensible reaction, telling Garn that he thought he was "suggesting . . . that the entire process of arms control negotiation is futile." Garn, admitting that he had called the "détente" of the Kissinger era just another word for appeasement, replied that what he wanted was "tough bargaining," a term which, freely translated, means posing unacceptable conditions to the Russians and then going on with the arms race at an ever-increasing pace.

These exchanges show the depth of the defenses of the unreconstructed militarists in Congress (and bad as the Republicans Garn, Goldwater, Tower, Helms and Bartlett are, one of the worst is the Democrat Henry Jackson of Washington). Carter will have a hard time pushing any agreement with the Russians past these blind watchdogs of the "national security," and the hearings on Admiral Turner give little promise of any fundamental reform of the "intelligence" apparatus that is one of its principal instruments.